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STATE PASS USTR/VERONEAU/CARRILLO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/20/2017  
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: DUSTR VERONEAU DISCUSSES TRADE, LABOR VIOLENCE  
WITH COLOMBIAN OFFICIALS

REF: BOGOTA 5932

Classified By: CDA BRIAN NICHOLS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. During his August 7-11 visit to Colombia, DUSTR John Veroneau discussed U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA) prospects and labor violence with Trade Minister Luis Guillermo Plata and Attorney General Mario Iguaran. Veroneau briefed the officials on the state of play in Washington and expressed support for Uribe Administration efforts to address labor and human rights concerns. Veroneau believed that the administration would bring the CTPA to a successful vote in the present Congress, and stated that the Administration planned to present pending FTA's to the Congress in the order that they were signed. The GOC expects that the Protocol modifying the CTPA will be approved in the Colombian Congress by October. End Summary.

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VERONEAU TO PLATA: CTPA WILL PASS, BUT TIMELINE UNCERTAIN  
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¶2. (C) DUSTR Veroneau exchanged views on CTPA developments with Trade Minister Luis Guillermo Plata during an August 8 luncheon. Presidential trade envoy Sandra Suarez, Vice Minister Trade Eduardo Munoz, and DCM at the Colombian Embassy in Washington Marianna Pacheco accompanied Plata. Veroneau told Plata that he felt confident that the current U.S. Congress will approve the CTPA. He outlined the Administration's proposed sequencing of pending trade agreements, in accord with the date of signing. Peru will go forward in September. Colombia should follow, but it might slip until 2008 depending on when Congress recesses for the year. Although some in Washington and on Capitol Hill have argued for Panama to leap-frog Colombia, the Administration believes that Colombia should follow Peru. Should Congress recess early, or the Peru deliberations slip, Veroneau judged that the Administration would send the CTPA to Congress in the February-March timeframe.

¶3. (C) Plata said that the GOC had just introduced the Protocol modifying the CTPA to the Colombian Congress for its approval. The present session began in late July and will continue until December. The GOC did so under emergency procedures in order to secure rapid approval. President Uribe will forge ahead, Plata underscored, despite expected pushback from some in Congress who will resist approving the Protocol while the agreement faces such an uncertain future in Washington. In a separate meeting, Senate President Nancy Gutierrez assured Veroneau that the Protocol faces no difficulties and the Colombian Congress would approve it no

later than October.

¶4. (C) Plata expressed concern over the potential requirement that Colombia enact legal and regulatory changes to their labor regime before the U.S. Congress would consider the accord. He asked Veroneau how the USG has handled that issue with Peru. The DUSTR explained that Peru had pledged to enact certain changes by decree, without legislative changes. Veroneau did not foresee changes to Colombian law becoming a pre-requisite for U.S. Congressional consideration of the CTPA. That being said, he emphasized that the process would require a U.S.-Colombia dialogue on labor to discuss commitments that the GOC would make to meet the concerns of certain members of Congress.

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LABOR VIOLENCE: PROGRESS MADE--STILL AWAITING CONVICTION  
NUMBERS  
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¶5. (U) Veroneau met on August 9 with Attorney General Mario Iguaran to discuss progress on labor violence cases. Director of International Affairs Francisco Echeverri, Current Human Rights Unit Director Leonardo Cabana, and prospective Human Rights Unit Director Sandra Castro accompanied Iguaran. Veroneau expressed support for the progress the Attorney General has made on human rights, and sought an update on cases of violence against labor leaders discussed in a March 2007 meeting he had with Cabana. Iguaran said that the GOC had made progress in those cases, but did not provide specific details regarding the number of cases closed or people convicted.

¶6. (U) The labor violence sub-unit of the AG's Human Rights Unit was created in October 2006 as part of a tripartite

agreement brokered by the International Labor Organization (ILO) between the GOC, labor leaders, and Colombian industry.

The AG equipped the unit with 13 special prosecutors, 85 investigators, and an annual budget of \$1.5 million, and charged the sub-unit with the prosecution of cases of violence against labor leaders, resulting in 89 convictions since 2001. Seven of those cases were prosecuted since the new unit was created, resulting in 11 individuals going to prison.

¶7. (C) Iguaran told Veroneau that Cabana had done an excellent job, but he would transfer Cabana from his post as Director of the Human Rights Unit to take charge of some other cases. Cabana's replacement is Sandra Castro, a former defense attorney who recently joined the office. Iguaran said Castro would provide an update on the labor cases when it becomes available.

¶8. (C) Comment: Prosecutors in the labor sub-unit previously complained to embassy officials about Cabana's lack of leadership abilities and dedication. Cabana proved un-responsive to USG requests for information regarding the progress of labor cases.

¶9. (U) DUSTR Veroneau cleared this message.  
Nichols